

For general release

Meeting: Children, Families and Schools Sub-Committee

Date: Monday 26 January 2004

Report of: Director of Children, Families and Schools

Subject: The provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs in Brighton and Hove.

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To set out for Members' consideration the current pattern of need, provision and expenditure in Brighton and Hove for those children and young people with a recognised special educational need.
- 1.2 To identify the opportunities for more effective use of available resource to achieve better outcomes for children and young people, as more integrated education, health and social care provision is developed with the Children's Trust.
- 1.3 To seek Members' approval for a review of provision to provide a report on options for change at the June 2004 meeting of the committee.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That officers be directed to review special educational needs and provision in Brighton and Hove and bring forward recommendations for development as appropriate.

3. Background

- 3.1 Shortly after the new Brighton and Hove Education Authority was established, a Special Educational Needs Task Group was set up to review the local pattern of provision. A number of pieces of work were carried out. The principal structural outcome was the establishment of the Alternative Centre for Education (ACE) in 2000. Since that time, there has been no further structural review.
- 3.2 Two important trends have affected the take up of places in local special schools. All mainstream schools have been encouraged to be more inclusive and where parents seek a mainstream place for their child with special needs, to accommodate them. National moves to securing disabled access to all buildings, including schools, have ensured that more children and young people with physical disabilities and mainstream learning needs can be accommodated in mainstream schools. There

are empty places in each of our schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, which are funded and therefore lock up resources.

- 3.3 National trends, reflected locally, have led to increases in the number of children with severe or profound multiple learning difficulties requiring education. Technical intervention allows some, who might previously have died, to survive infancy. They need an educational environment with a high level of medical and personal care.
- 3.4 The links between socio-economic deprivation, family difficulty and poor learning outcomes are well established. Brighton and Hove has a disproportionate number of the child population in public care, a proportion of whom are on the child protection register. 76% of Young Offenders in Brighton and Hove are on the SEN register. Where a child in public care has special educational needs, a place in a residential school is sometimes sought to meet the educational and care needs simultaneously. The costs of such places have grown ahead of the rate of inflation in recent years.
- 3.5 The District Auditor has reviewed our provision for special educational needs (final report available in February) and has commented on poor value for money.
- 3.6 The pattern of current need, provision and costs is set out in Appendix 2.

4. Issues

4.1 The five key objectives for Children, Families and Schools are:

- High achieving, inclusive schools and learning,
- Keeping children safe and thriving,
- Developing integrated services where these are shown to be effective,
- Delivering services in partnership with young people and their communities,
- Building an effective workforce.

4.2 To achieve these objectives for children and young people with identified special educational needs, within a value for money framework we need to ensure that

- as many children as possible can have their needs met in the local community
- that our local special schools can provide an integrated education, health and care service
- that mainstream schools receive the appropriate resource and support to include those pupils for whom this is an appropriate placement, whose parents choose it
- that children's needs are identified accurately and early to ensure that they achieve to the highest level possible
- that our school staff receive the appropriate training and development to enable them to meet a developing range of needs, locally.

4.3 The scope of the review should therefore cover:

- Calculation of the number and type of special school places required in the City
- The nature and size of the support services, including educational psychologists
- The extent to which health, social care and educational needs are met within an integrated structure and the scope for further development
- The support for higher levels of inclusion in mainstream schools

- Possible new developments, including the capacity to provide integrated education and therapeutic care arrangements within the City
- The capacity to recycle resources to achieve a cost effective system that supports the best educational outcomes for all Brighton and Hove children and young people
- The effectiveness of the support provided to children and young people with SEN.

4.4 Some elements of review have already been undertaken. In particular, the formula for funding pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools has been reviewed and made the subject of consultation under the aegis of the Schools Forum. The funding matrix for Special Schools has been piloted this year and will be evaluated. The number of places and the use made of the balance of funding for empty places, in schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, have been reviewed during the Autumn term. The District Auditor will provide a final report with recommendations for action in February. The Ofsted/SSI inspection in January 2004 will also produce recommendations for action.

4.5 These elements will be brought together within the strategic review proposed in this report.

5. Consultation

5.1 In the process of the review, all the governing bodies of the Special Schools will have the opportunity to receive and comment on the data and information underpinning the review. Partners in the health Economy will have the same opportunity as will managers and officers in Children, Families and Schools, and parents partnership groups. They will also have the opportunity to comment on emerging policy issues. This will not constitute formal consultation on any changes that might be considered; that will be a matter for Committee to decide.

5.2 Open discussion of possible policy development or change is sometimes seen as an opportunity to mobilise opposition, before any proposal can be approved by Members for consultation. Officers will need to be aware of the vulnerability of the parent and pupil population when any suggestion of change to the arrangements on which they depend, is made. Parent governors of Special Schools will be asked to form a network to reflect parent views before any wider discussion takes place.

